

**Improving Services at DSHR**  
**Through Process Workflow Management**

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## **Improving Services at DSHR through Process Workflow Management**

### **Problem Statement**

The mission of the Department of Administration is to partner with agencies to deliver responsive and cost-effective services to our citizens by leading the efforts to provide innovative, efficient, and standardized support services to state government. The Division of State Human Resources (DSHR) falls under the Department of Administration. Headed by the State Human Resources Director, the division is comprised of the following functional areas: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Human Capital Management (HCM), Training and Development, Workforce Planning, and InfoSec/Privacy Consulting. (See the organizational chart for DSHR in Appendix 1.)

The mission of DSHR is to partner with our customers to improve agency performance by ensuring excellence in their human resources functions. Through consultation and oversight, professional development, and alternative dispute resolution, we support state agencies as they address their human resources issues. Our DSHR staff offers advice and services customized for specific agencies to help agency staff:

1. Anticipate and plan for workforce needs now and in the future;
2. Recruit, develop, and retain the most talented employees to meet the agency mission;
3. Develop sound human resources policies and procedures, and effectively interpret controlling laws, regulations, and policies;
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of an agency's organizational structure and processes to maximize productivity; and
5. Mediate workplace matters.

It is critical to our credibility in our consulting role that our staff is responsive, and that our services are innovative, efficient, and standardized. This is challenging due to the small size of our staff; particularly when the office experiences staff turnover. Therefore, it is critical to develop and maintain standard operating procedures to be used to orient new staff quickly and consistently, and also to ensure that our consulting is consistent from customer to customer. We serve the staff and employees of over seventy State agencies, so clear, concise, well-documented procedures allow us to partner with our customers to ensure excellence in human resources, and to improve agency performance.

The goal of this project is to create a comprehensive, detailed process workflow document for DSHR to include a flowchart and written procedures for all work processes in the office. This will enhance our ability to achieve our mission.

### **Data Collection**

As stated previously, our DSHR staff is small in comparison to the number of agencies and State employees that we serve. Our staff also spends a significant amount of time away from the office while consulting with agencies, conducting training for State employees, and serving as mediators and arbitrators for the State grievance process. Our managers are included in these tasks as well. This means that the staff remaining in the office often must be able to work independently, and have the tools to provide accurate, efficient responses to agencies without assistance from other staff members or managers.

In the absence of thorough, accurately documented processes and procedures, each staff member may have a different method of accomplishing a given task. These methods may not always be correct, and they are certainly less likely to be standardized from one staff member to another. Standardized processes ensure that a customer will receive the same level of service,

delivered in the same manner, no matter which staff member may be assisting them at the time. This is important in the HR Consulting area, as consultants regularly assist agencies assigned to other consultants when that assigned consultant is not available. Consistency in service builds credibility for DSHR. HR Consultants at DSHR are also designated as “subject matter experts” in certain areas of human resources. Documented procedures also allow tasks to be reliably and accurately completed even if the subject matter expert most familiar with the process is unavailable or leaves the agency.

When documenting processes, Jason Robinson (2012) suggests using simple language, short sentences, good grammar, and avoiding abbreviations. He also suggests using position titles, not employees’ names, consistently throughout the documentation, as the names will change with turnover. It is also helpful to keep terminology consistent throughout the documentation. All process documentation should be stored in a single location accessible to all who have a need to use it. A standard template for documentation should be used, and all documentation should be dated each time it is updated.

In summary, according to Robinson (2012), the major advantages of process documentation are that:

- It assures continuity of process and quality, while staff is unavailable.
- It improves communication and documents expectations.
- Written procedures will make it easier to train new employees.
- It prevents re-inventing the wheel for each project or task.
- It improves efficiency and productivity levels within the organization.

The Management Study Guide (2017) points out several benefits of process documentation. When processes are documented in a written, detailed manner, they are readily

available for analysis when required. This allows managers and other staff to understand the logic that was used in developing the processes that are currently in place. Then a decision can be made as to whether these are still the best practices, or whether they need to be revised considering the current work environment. Complete documentation of processes also allows the organization to have a clear, mutual understanding of the capabilities of the organization. This helps to determine what the organization can truly promise to deliver to the customer and in what timeframe. This will reduce the likelihood of over and/or under promising, which can cause frustration and lack of trust in customers.

There is another practical reason for documenting processes. Mark Moore (2007) explains that, typically, when a process is new, a considerable amount of time and energy is spent trying to get the task done. However, the task may not need to be performed again for some period of time. If we didn't take the time to document the steps we utilized to perform the task the first time, we often find that we have forgotten some or all of the process. This is very frustrating, unproductive, and can hinder our ability to complete tasks for customers in a timely manner. Once the time is taken to clearly document the process, "There is no more banging your head against the wall because your memory or lack of practice has let you down."

According to Owen Enaohwo (2013), clear process documentation also ensures the best use of financial resources. This is because tasks previously performed by higher-paid staff and even managers can be delegated so that the higher paid staff can focus their time and energy on higher-level job responsibilities. The staff to which tasks are being delegated can't read minds, however. A great deal of time can be wasted if clear directions and templates for completing work are not provided when the tasks are delegated. Delegating tasks previously performed by

higher level staff also shows trust in the staff to which the tasks are delegated and may increase job satisfaction by enriching the lower level staff member's job.

As mentioned earlier, the ability of the DSHR staff to provide services that are responsive, efficient, and standardized is challenged by the small size of our staff and the impact of turnover. For example, there are six Human Resource Consultants whose primary job is to provide services to over seventy State agencies. Of these six consultants, five have been in their positions for less than three years. This turnover has a significant impact on the office for many reasons.

Julie Kantor (2016) notes turnover is very costly for organizations. According to a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), an employer spends six to nine months of an employee's salary to find and train their replacement. The average salary of professionals at DSHR is \$72,611. Therefore, according to the SHRM study, it would cost on average between \$36,305.50, and \$54,458.25 to find and train a replacement. Another study, conducted by the Center for America Progress, found that replacing an employee can cost anywhere from 16% of their salary for an hourly employee to 213% of the salary for a highly-trained position. Interviewing and training lowers productivity of others, often managers, in the office, as these tasks take time away from normal job duties. Turnover may also contribute to lower engagement among remaining staff, as they are left overworked and can become less motivated and less satisfied with their work. When other staff members leave, remaining employees may also speculate as to the reason(s), leading to unhealthy gossip in the workplace.

The productivity of a new hire may also be slow to reach the level of experienced employees. According to Josh Bersin, of Bersin by Deloitte, it can take up to two years for a new

employee to reach the same productivity level as existing employees. In the meantime, customer service may suffer.

These negative effects of turnover can be combatted, however. One of the ways this can be accomplished is by having a clear mentoring and training plan in place when new employees start. At DSHR, all new staff members are assigned mentors. The creation of a comprehensive procedure manual will greatly improve the onboarding experience and assist the mentor in the process of acclimating new staff to DSHR.

Patricia Lotich (2016) points out that, once the procedure manual is implemented, in addition to being used as a training tool to orient new employees, it may also be used to measure an employee's performance by determining if processes are being followed correctly and consistently. The processes should be reviewed and updated at least once a year to ensure that they are current and to make any adjustments. It is important to make all staff members aware when updates and/or changes are made to processes that they utilize in the performance of their job.

Based on all the benefits of creating and documenting standardized processes, it is clear that doing so will benefit DSHR in the accomplishment of our mission. Our process workflow manual will include both a flowchart and a written procedure for each process.

A flowchart is a way to visually document the steps in a process. It is a diagram that shows the sequential steps in a process and how they fit together. According to the editorial team for Mind Tools (2017), Frank Gilbreth is believed to be the first person to document a process using the concept of a "process chart" in a meeting of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1921. Flowcharts typically contain four main symbols, which are connected by arrows which show the direction of the flow of the steps.

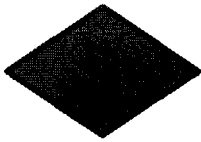
1. Elongated circles indicate the start and end of the process.



2. Rectangles represent instructions or actions.



3. Diamonds indicate the need to make a decision.



4. Parallelograms show inputs and outputs, such as materials, services, or people.



The completion of a process often involves more than one person or group within the organization and requires communication between the people or groups involved. When the process for managing the process is not clear, processing gaps, inefficiencies, and duplication of effort can occur, resulting in reduced performance and customer service.

The use of “swim lanes” in the flowcharting process is a good method for integrating processes between staff members and work units. Swim lanes were introduced by Geary Rummler and Alan Brache in their book Improving Processes, published in 1990. Swim lanes may be horizontal or vertical. They identify what individual or unit is responsible for which steps in the process. Therefore, each swim lane is labeled with the responsible party, and the actions and decisions included in the flowchart are placed in the row or column of the responsible party.



The flowchart with swim lanes allows the users to easily see who is responsible for what and identify any potential inefficiencies in the process of passing the process between parties.

The four steps involved in creating a flowchart with swim lanes are:

1. Identify Tasks: List all the steps involved in the process in chronological order, including when decisions need to be made. When documenting the steps, put yourself in the position of someone performing the process for the first time, ensuring that no step is overlooked. Involve staff members who perform the process on a regular basis.
2. Identify all Participants in the Tasks: this includes all the staff members participating in the process, and anyone who provides inputs and receives outputs from the process.
3. Create the Swim Lanes: A swim lane should be established for each party involved in the process. Put the swim lanes in order from the party that provides the first input, often a customer. (For example, an agency submitting an action for review and approval.) The existing flowcharts for DSHR have vertical swim lanes.
4. Organize and Document Tasks: Start the flowchart with the elongated circle. List the actions and decisions in the order in which they happen in the appropriate swim lane. Connect the actions and decisions with arrows to indicate the flow of the process. When a decision is required, draw an arrow to each possible solution and label the decision on the arrow (e.g., “Yes” or “No”, “Approve” or “Disapprove”). End the process with an elongated circle.
5. Review the Process: Start at the beginning of the flowchart and review each step to ensure that none have been left out. Are the steps in the proper order? Are all decision points included? Are all actions and decisions in the correct swim lane? Ask other staff

members who are familiar with the process to review the flowchart for accuracy and clarity.

6. Challenge the Current Process: Once the current process is accurately and completely documented, review it again to determine whether any steps are not necessary. Also, ensure that there are no bottlenecks slowing down the process, and that the actions and decisions are assigned to the correct positions in the organization, or automated when appropriate. Update the flowchart as needed and get any necessary approvals for changes.

### **Data Analysis**

Flowcharts for many processes performed within DSHR have been developed in the past. Most of these are at least five years old, and in many cases, either obsolete or in need of updating due to changes in regulation and/or technology. Some processes are also documented using written step by step procedures. These documents are currently stored in various folders on DSHR's G: drive. They are not always readily accessible, and they are scattered in different locations. Therefore, they are not very useful for training purposes or reference by existing staff. Some staff may not even be aware that written procedures exists for some processes.

This project was started by compiling a list of all flowcharts and processes currently in existence. They were organized in a spreadsheet by functional area within the office. These areas include: ADR, HCM, SCEIS (South Carolina Enterprise Information System) Operations, Training and Development, Workforce Planning, and InfoSec and Privacy Consulting. The ADR staff is in the process of updating the flow charts and written procedures for their area.

Because the ADR staff had already begun its process, and due to the large number of processes in the HCM function, the decision was made to begin the review process with this area of the office. The staff in this area, consisting of the six Human Resources Consultants and the

Human Capital Manager met to discuss the project. The spreadsheet documenting existing processes in the HCM area was reviewed by the staff. The staff brainstormed processes that either were not in existence when the processes were last documented, or were not included. The staff also deleted outdated processes. The processes that are utilized more frequently are marked with an asterisk. These will be updated and/or documented before the processes of lower priority.

Before asking staff to volunteer to review and document flowcharts and processes, columns were added to the spreadsheet to indicate which processes have existing flowcharts and /or procedures. The locations of these documents on the G: drive was also noted to assist staff in locating the current documents for editing. Columns were added to the spreadsheet to note who is working on each process and the date it is completed. The spreadsheet entitled “DHSR Processes” is Appendix 2.

Visio, a Microsoft Office Suite product that is designed to create layouts, charts and diagrams, is being used to create the flowcharts for our processes. It includes graphics that are standard in the creation of flowcharts; and the program is intuitive to use. Because the flowcharts that are currently in existence were created in Visio, it will be used to modify the existing flowcharts and create new flowcharts as needed.

Processes will be assigned to various staff members to document with both a flowchart in Visio and corresponding written procedures in Microsoft Word. The flowchart and the procedures for a given process will have numbered steps that match one another. The flowchart and associated procedure for each process will be compiled into one procedure manual that will be accessible to all staff on the G: drive. Upon completion, the procedure manual will encompass all functional areas of DSHR. See Appendix 3 for the process flowcharts and corresponding written procedures completed for HCM.

## **Implementation Plan**

The implementation plan for the project is as follows:

- **Action Steps:** A flowchart and a corresponding procedure will be revised or developed by the Human Resource Consultants for each HCM process. Progress toward this goal will be tracked on the “DHSR Processes” spreadsheet. Once completed, the documents will be reviewed for consistency in format and language. They will then be tested to determine their usefulness by asking a staff member who is not normally the subject matter expert on a given process to utilize the flowchart and procedure to complete the process. This will ensure that the documentation is complete and specific, with no missing steps. Revisions will be made as needed. The process will then be incorporated into the process workflow manual.
- **Timeframe and Cost:** Due to workload and staff size, progress thus far has not been rapid. The goal is to complete documentation of all HCM processes by June 30, 2017, the end of this fiscal year. This deadline will be re-assessed at the beginning of April to evaluate progress. Implementation of the project will not have a cost in addition to the cost of staff time for completion. However, this cost is not minimal. For example, a staff member earning \$65,000 annually has an hourly rate of approximately \$31 per hour. Assume that one process takes two hours to document with both a flow chart and a written procedure. There are approximately 70 HCM processes currently identified for documentation. Therefore, an approximate cost of the current scope of the project is \$4,340.

- Potential Obstacles and Methods to Overcome Them: The main obstacle is the “tyranny of the urgent,” or other job tasks taking precedence over working on this project. The project owner, with support of the Human Capital Manager, will need to follow up with consultants to ensure that documentation is being completed on schedule. This can be done individually, and in weekly HCM staff meetings.
- Potential Resources: The existing flow charts and written procedures are an excellent resource because they eliminate the need for us to “recreate the wheel.” Templates already exist that can be used as a starting point and improved upon. The subject matter experts for the various processes are valuable resources that allow us to capture their knowledge and utilize it when they are out of the office, or if they are no longer on staff in the future.
- Communication with Key Stakeholders: The stakeholders in this project are the DSHR staff members who will utilize the procedures. Since they will be taking part in the completion of the project, communication will take place as the project is ongoing.
- Integration into Standard Operating Procedures: Once the project is complete, it will be important to point staff back to the procedures to ensure that they are referenced as a normal course of action, and utilized in the completion of tasks. This regular review will also allow the staff to easily identify when updates to the processes are required. The procedures, of course, will also be a key component in the onboarding of new staff members.

## **Evaluation Method**

As the flowcharts and associated procedures are developed for each process, they will be reviewed to ensure that they are complete, accurate, and consistent in terms of language used and format. As they are incorporated in to the process workflow manual and used by staff members, any errors or discrepancies should be brought to attention of the project lead so that they may be addressed. In addition, the project lead will review the HCM processes at the beginning of each fiscal year to ensure that they are all current, and that any new processes have been incorporated. When changes are made to existing processes, the project lead will notify the staff to the changes.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

The successful completion and implementation of this project will assist DSHR in accomplishing its mission to partner with our customers to ensure excellence in human resources, and to improve agency performance through realized benefits to include:

- Providing accurate, consistent information and consultation,
- Orienting new DSHR staff quickly and consistently,
- Using time and staff resources wisely by not “reinventing the wheel,”
- Ensuring that DSHR does not over or under promise services, and
- Being fiscally responsible by delegating tasks to lower level staff.

In summary, by accomplishing our mission as a Division, we will ultimately accomplish the mission of the Department of Administration; which is to partner with agencies to deliver responsive and cost-effective services to our citizens by leading the efforts to provide innovative, efficient, and standardized support services to state government. We can take pride in our work if we can, in fact, accomplish this mission for the betterment of our State.

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